

Jesus is the builder; we are the workers

Anniversary Sunday, September 22, 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Children's Message: from Acts 1:3-9

Have an electric drill with me. Ask for a person who has a stopwatch to time me, how long it takes to drill a hole through a block of wood. (Push hard on it, so it will be done as quickly as possible.)

Now pull out the plug. Try doing it without the electricity. I have to turn the bit by hand. Even one little wood shaving takes a painfully long time. It would take me hours to do what electricity allowed me to do in seconds.

Jesus told his followers that they must go out and tell everyone about him. But he also told them that they must wait until they have received the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is God living in us. The Holy Spirit is our spiritual power source.

Message: "Jesus is the builder; we are the workers"

One morning as a couple were both getting ready to go to work, the woman said to her husband, "Honey, I'll bet you do not know what day this is." Now he was awful for forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, so he knew he was in trouble. He thought quickly and as he left he said, "Honey, how could I ever forget. This is the best day of our lives."

All that day he kept trying to remember when his wife's birthday was, and when their anniversary was, but he couldn't remember. As it came time for him to return home, he grew fearful of hurting his wife's feelings for forgetting the special day. Just before he got home, he had an idea. He rushed into the house and said, "Honey, get your best dress on. We are going to celebrate this wonderful day!"

While she was getting ready he rushed down to the florist and bought her a lovely bouquet of flowers. He took her to the most expensive restaurant in town. He spent \$150.00 to celebrate this day and he did not even know what he was celebrating.

When they got back home, she gave him a big hug and a kiss. She said, "Darling, thank-you. That was

the nicest Ground Hog Day we have ever enjoyed together."

Well, today is a special day. We are celebrating the founding of St. Paul's Church, and its life from then until now, and into the future. One hundred and sixty-six years ago, a group of Christians erected a church building here. Obviously, they didn't just get together over coffee one night and decide to have a church-raising bee the next Saturday. They probably had already been worshipping as a congregation in some other space before they got to the point of putting up a building. But 1853 is the only recorded date we have to go by, so we set our anniversary according to that.

In 1853 Canada as a nation didn't even exist; we were still a British colony. The wage for a skilled worker was about \$2.00 per day. Roast beef was 9 ¢/pound. You could rent an apartment for \$6/month. A gallon of fuel oil was 25¢. Potato chips were invented that year. And Bob Hulin started publishing the Stirling Argus newspaper that year!☺

We look back upon that time with awe and admiration, for how people persevered through hard living. We also look back with thanksgiving, for we would not be here today were it not for them.

We may honour our ancestors in the faith which made this day possible. But the greatest honour belongs to Jesus, who is the very heart of the church, the reason we're here.

Jesus is the one who started the church. He gathered around him a group of people. He taught them everything he knew (see John 15:15), and then gave them a mission: to tell the whole world about him and God's love. That's how the church began.

Here's a passage where he talks about building the church:

Matthew 16:15-18, New Revised Standard Version:
[Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

Jesus started the church, and through the Holy Spirit helped it to grow. That's how we got where we are now.

Suppose Jesus were here today (he is, by the way). And suppose Jesus asked you, "Who do you say that I am?" How would you answer that question?

What I'm really looking for here isn't so much what *words* you would use to answer that question; but rather how you *show* your answer in the way you live. Are your actions consistent with your words? Are my actions consistent with my words?

A French communist newspaper published a challenge to Christians and churches. The Billy Graham Association later reprinted it in their own magazine.

The Gospel is a much more powerful weapon for the renewal of society than is our Marxist philosophy. All the same, it is we who will finally beat you; We are only a handful and you Christians are numbered by the million. But if you remember the story of Gideon and his three hundred companions, you will understand why I am right.

We Communists do not play with words. We are realists, and seeing that we are determined to achieve our object we know how to obtain the means. Of our salaries and wage we keep only what is strictly necessary; we give up the rest for propaganda purposes; to this propaganda we also consecrate all of our free time and part of our holidays. You however, give only a little time and hardly any money for the spreading of the Gospel of Christ. How can anyone believe in the supreme value of this Gospel if you do not practice it, if you do not spread it, and if you sacrifice neither the time nor money for it?

Believe me, it is we who will win, for we believe in our Communist message and we are ready to sacrifice everything, even our life, in order that the social justice shall triumph. But you people are afraid to soil your hands.

Wow! Does that make you squirm, make you feel guilty? There's an old saying, "If you throw a rock at a pack of dogs, the one that yelps is the one that got hit." In other words, if that's your reaction to hearing this, maybe it's because you got hit. I know it sure hit me.

I have only one word of hope for us about this. In that Scripture we just read, Jesus made this statement: "On this rock I will build my church." Ultimately it is not by our efforts alone that the church—and remember, the church is not the building, but the body of people—that the church grows. It is us working together with Jesus. It's like Jesus is the contractor in charge of the project, and we are the workers following his instructions.

If we attempt to do this work by ourselves, by our own power, we are doomed already. In fact, if we build this organization by our own ways, we are not building a church at all, but rather a social club.

But when Jesus is in his rightful place as the Head of the Body, the Centre of the Church, and the Lord of our lives, then the rest falls into place. So let us reaffirm our commitment to do just that. I invite you to join me in prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
This is your church, not ours.
We belong to you, not it to us.
Therefore we re-dedicate ourselves as
your servants. Lead us, and we
will follow.
Command us, and we will obey.
Love us, and we will spread that love
to all around us.
All that we do, may we do it in your
name and for your glory.
Amen.

Next Steps:

- Pray: Make or renew your commitment as a servant of Jesus.
- Be a witness for Jesus. Two ways we do this:
 - *Tell* other people what Jesus has meant in your life. Tell about the joy, the love, the hope you receive from him.

Show other people what Jesus has meant in your life: be a loving, joyful, generous, positive, kind person with all whom you meet. Utterly depend on the Holy Spirit to help you become the kind of person God wants.